

The Center for Grassroots Oversight

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Profile: Emad Salem

Related Entities:

- Acquaintance of Omar Abdul-Rahman

Emad Salem was a participant or observer in the following events:

February 9, 1988: Emad Salem Arrives in US; Becomes FBI Informant

Emad Salem, a former lieutenant colonel in the Egyptian army, arrives in New York from Egypt (Thomas and Randolph 8/26/1993) He soon starts working for the FBI as an informant in the underworld of the New York Russian community—with particular attention to activities involving the Russian mafia and KGB. (Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 69) FBI officials are wary of Salem, however, because they suspect that he may be connected to Egyptian intelligence. (Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 71)

Early July 1992: FBI Fires Informant Who Has Penetrated WTC Bombing Group



Emad Salem. [Source: National Geographic]

In mid-June 1992, FBI informant Emad Salem talks to El Sayyid Nosair, who is in prison for killing Zionist leader Rabbi Meir Kahane (see November 5, 1990). Nosair and an associate of his named Ali Shinawy reveal to Salem that their group (all of whom are close to Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman) is plotting to set off bombs at twelve “Jewish locations” in New York City, including temples and banks. A few days later, Nosair’s cousin Ibrahim El-Gabrowni introduces Salem to “Dr. Rashid,” which is an alias for Clement Rodney Hampton-El, although Salem does not know that yet. “Dr. Rashid” says he is unable to get the remote bomb detonators the group wants, but he can get already assembled pipe bombs for about \$1,000 apiece, and guns. Salem and Shinawy agree to find a warehouse where they can build the bombs. Salem tells all of this to his FBI handlers Louis Napoli and John Anticev, but their boss, Carson Dunbar, insists that Salem has to wear a wire so they can record conversations in order to get the evidence to make a convincing court case against

the plotters. But Salem, who is only being paid \$500 a week to inform for the FBI, refuses to wear a wire, saying it is too dangerous. The FBI had been able to corroborate most of Salem’s information through their own surveillance such as the monitoring of Nosair’s calls from prison. But even though Salem is easily the FBI’s best source of information on Abdul-Rahman’s group, the FBI fires Salem in early July 1991. (Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 70-75) The FBI had a long tradition of having pure intelligence agents who did not wear wires. One FBI source will later note that the FBI could have easily gotten what they needed to make a criminal case without Salem wearing a wire. “It would just take a little more work. We’d have to take his leads and do surveillance. Follow these guys and contain the threat. This is what the FBI does.” (Lance 2003, pp. 92) Author Peter Lance will later comment that without Salem, “Now, when it came to Nosair, the bombing plot, and Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, the [FBI] was essentially flying blind.” The FBI will be unaware as the “Jewish locations” plot morphs into a plot to bomb the World Trade Center over the next several months. (Lance 2003, pp. 92)

Mid-November-December 20, 1992: FBI Informant Learns of Plot to Train and Arm Group with Automatic Weapons and Bombs

In mid-November 1992, Garrett Wilson, an FBI informant who sells military equipment and conducts paramilitary training, is contacted by someone named “Dr. Rashid.” Wilson had previously been contacted by Abu Ubaidah Yahya, the security chief at the Al-Kifah Refugee Center in Brooklyn, a charity front tied to

both al-Qaeda and the CIA (see 1986-1993). Wilson's FBI handlers are excited to learn about this because in June 1992, a "Dr. Rashid" had met with FBI informant Emad Salem and offered to supply bombs and guns (see Early July 1992). The FBI runs a background check and determines "Dr. Rashid" is really Clement Rodney Hampton-El, who works at a hospital in Long Island. The also learn from phone records that he has recently made calls to the "Blind Sheikh," Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman. On December 20, 1992, Wilson meets with Yahya and Hampton-El. They tell him that they want him to train eight to ten men for an international jihad battalion separate from another small group Al-Kifah wants Wilson to help train (see October 3, 1992). Hampton-El says he will provide AK-47s for the training sessions, but is looking for detonator caps, which are needed to make bombs. He also says the group will be sent to fight in Bosnia, but they are asking to be instructed in sniper firing and frontal assaults on buildings. Wilson tells FBI agent Tommy Corrigan, "It sounds to me like they either want to kidnap or kill someone." Corrigan and other FBI agents are alarmed. (Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 83-84)

December 19, 1992: FBI, Having Fired Key Informant, Misses Opportunity to Uncover WTC Bombing Plot

Mahmud Abouhalima, one of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing plotters, calls Emad Salem. Salem had been an FBI informant on a group close to the "Blind Sheikh," Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, including Abouhalima, but was fired by the FBI some months ago (see Early July 1992). Salem is mad at the FBI about being fired and doesn't bother to tell it about the phone call, and doesn't call Abouhalima back. It will later be discovered that on this same day other plotters begin calling chemical companies in search of bomb parts, and the next day another FBI informant will be contacted and asked to help get bomb parts (see Mid-November-December 20, 1992). Salem has bomb-making expertise so it is likely Abouhalima calls him to get help in making the bomb to blow up the WTC. The authors of the 2002 book *The Cell* will note that had Salem still been working as an informant for the FBI at the time of this call, the WTC bombing plot "might well have been cracked before Salem had hung up the phone." (Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 84-85)

February 26, 1993: WTC Is Bombed but Does Not Collapse, as Bombers Had Hoped



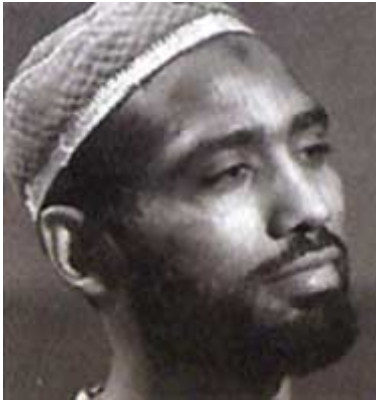
Bomb damage in underground levels of the WTC in 1993.
[Source: Najlah Feanny/ Corbis]

An attempt to topple the World Trade Center fails, but six people are killed and over 1000 are injured in the misfired blast. An FBI explosives expert later states that, "If they had found the exact architectural Achilles' heel or if the bomb had been a little bit bigger, not much more, 500 pounds more, I think it would have brought her down." Ramzi Yousef, who has close ties to bin Laden, organizes the attempt. (Friedman 3/30/1993; US Congress 2/24/1998) The New York Times later reports on Emad Salem, an undercover agent who will be the key government witness in the trial against Yousef. Salem testifies that the FBI knew about the attack beforehand and told him they would thwart it by substituting a harmless powder for the explosives. However, an FBI supervisor called off this plan, and the bombing was not stopped. (Blumenthal 10/28/1993)

Other suspects were ineptly investigated before the bombing as early as 1990. Several of the bombers were trained by the CIA to fight in the Afghan war, and the CIA later concludes, in internal documents, that it was "partly culpable" for this bombing (see January 24, 1994). (Marshall 11/1/1998) 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed is an uncle of Yousef and also has a role in the WTC bombing (see March 20, 1993). (Gumbel 6/6/2002; McDermott 9/1/2002) One of the attackers even leaves a message which will later be found by investigators, stating, "Next time, it will be very precise." (Neumeister 9/30/2001)

Spring 1993: 'Blind Sheikh' Plot to Crash Airplane into US Embassy in Egypt

In March 1995, Emad Salem, an FBI informant and an ex-Egyptian army officer, publicly testifies in a 1995 trial of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing plotters. He mentions a plot taking place at this time by Islamic radicals tied to the "Blind Sheikh," Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman (see July 1990). A Sudanese Air Force pilot would hijack an airplane, attack Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, then crash the plane into the



Siddig Siddig Ali. [Source: Chester Higgins / New York Times]

US Embassy in Cairo, Egypt. Siddig Siddig Ali, who will be one of the defendants in the trial, asks Salem for help to find “gaps in the air defense in Egypt” so the pilot could “bomb the presidential house and then turn around, crash the plane into the American embassy after he ejects himself out of the plane.” Abdul-Rahman gives his approval to the plot, but apparently it never goes beyond the discussion stage. Although details of this plot are in public records of the World Trade Center bombing trial, both the 9/11 Congressional Inquiry and 9/11 Commission fail to mention it. (Lance 2004, pp. 196; Berger 4/8/2004) Abdul-Rahman is closely tied to bin Laden and in fact in 1998 there will be an al-Qaeda hijacking plot designed to free him from prison (see 1998). Individuals connected to Abdul-Rahman and al-Qaeda will also plot to crash an airplane into the White House in 1996 (see January 1996).

April 23, 1993: FBI Discovers Follow-up Plot to WTC Bombing; Sudanese Diplomats Are Reportedly Involved

In the wake of the 1993 WTC bombing (see February 26, 1993), Emad Salem is rehired as an FBI informant. Because Salem has the confidence of the group around the “Blind Sheikh” Omar Abdul-Rahman connected to the bombing, the FBI is so desperate to hire him back that they pay him over \$1 million to return. It takes time for Salem to fully regain confidences, but on April 23, 1993, Siddig Siddig Ali approaches Salem and asks him to participate in a series of bombings that he is planning. Siddig Ali explains that he wants to simultaneously bomb four landmarks in New York City: the Lincoln and Holland tunnel, the United Nations headquarters, and the New York FBI office. This will later be known as the “Landmarks” plot. Siddig Ali later tells Salem that he has friends in the Sudanese Embassy who had approved the plan and are willing to help with diplomatic license plates and credentials. Wearing a wire, over the next weeks Salem meets and records others participating in the plot. Many of them, including Siddig Ali, attended a training camp the FBI briefly monitored back in January 1993 (see January 16-17, 1993). (Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 113-114) The FBI will expand its surveillance of the plotters and roll up the plot a couple of months later (see June 24, 1993). The US will later eject two Sudanese diplomats, Siraj Yousif and Ahmed Yousif Mohamed, for suspicions of involvement in the plot. Both are said to be intelligence agents posing as diplomats. Later in 1993, the US also places Sudan on a list of terrorist countries. (Prial 8/18/1993; Wren 4/11/1996)

June 24, 1993: New York ‘Landmarks’ Bombing Plot Is Foiled



Informant Emad Salem, pictured bent over in a green shirt, enables the FBI to take surveillance footage like this of the plotters making a bomb. [Source: National Geographic]

Eight people are arrested, foiling a plot to bomb several New York City landmarks. The targets were the United Nations building, 26 Federal Plaza, and the Lincoln and Holland tunnels. This is known as the “Landmarks” or “Day of Terror” plot. The plotters are connected to Ramzi Yousef and the “Blind Sheikh,” Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman. If the bombing, planned for later in the year, had been successful, thousands would have died. An FBI informant named Emad Salem had infiltrated the group, gathering information that leads to arrests of the plotters (see April 23, 1993). (US Congress 7/24/2003) Abdul-Rahman will eventually be sentenced to life in prison for a role in the plot. Nine others will be given long prison terms, including Ibrahim El-Gabrowni and Clement Rodney Hampton-El. (Fried 1/18/1996) Siddig Siddig Ali, who was possibly the main force behind the plot (see April 23, 1993), will eventually be sentenced to only 11 years in prison because he agreed to provide evidence on the other suspects (Weiser 10/16/1999)



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